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YELLOW BEAUTY



LAIRD & LEE, CHICAGO.



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YELLOW BEAUTY



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BY

MARION MARTIN

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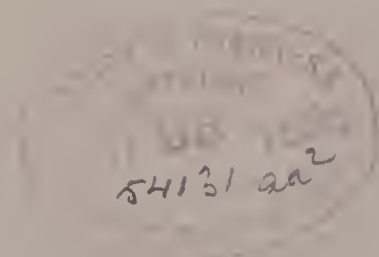
HENRIETTE RONNER

OF THE BELGIAN ROYAL ACADEMY, THE CELEBRATED
PAINTER OF CATS



CHICAGO

LAIRD & LEE, PUBLISHERS



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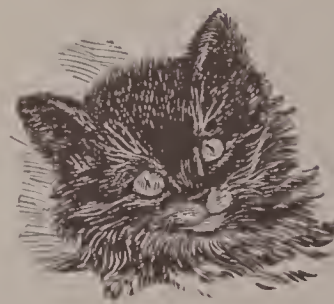
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DEDICATED
TO MY LITTLE NIECE
DOROTHY WEED
AND
TO THE BOYS AND GIRLS OF AMERICA
IN THE HOPE THAT THEY WILL ALWAYS BE
KIND TO KITTENS
AND
EVERY LIVING CREATURE

KITTENS AND CATS

Kittens and Cats! Kittens and Cats!
The dread of small mice and the horror of rats!
They're the pets of our happy home.
There's Tabbie, and Kittie, and Lulu-White,
With amber eyes that shine as bright
As the stars in the summer sky.
There's Fifi, and Toto, and Nicholas, too,
And one we call Trilby, because of her feet,
And one we call Candy because she is sweet.
But Tighe is the monarch, you should see him stare,
As fierce as a tiger just out of his lair;
Then march, like a warrior, waving his tail,
Like a mast, or a sail, of a ship in a gale,
On the top of an ocean wave.
Kittens and Cats! Kittens and Cats!
They scare the mice and worry the rats!
And sometimes sleep in our Sunday hats,
And do most mischievous things.



When you've read this story of three of our cats,
You'll forget all about the mice and the rats
As you laugh at their merry ways.





R. Mann brandished
a long knife.

He was my good
butcher, and his stall
was in the great Sut-
ter Street Market of
San Francisco.

The sharp blade fell
dexterously into the fine leg
of lamb that Mr. Mann had
in his hand, and even with the
eyes of a novice I could see that
the knife was giving Mr. Mann the
best of the transaction. But when
the time came for the balancing
of the scales there was such a
glaring sleight-of-hand perform-
ance that some one had to turn their
eyes away. Mr. John Mann's
looked happily unconscious, so I



dropped mine to the floor. And what do you think I found?

Not a bright twenty dollar gold piece to pay for those delicate ribs and plump kidneys sheathed in their white fatness, but something once sought after as a coveted prize—a golden fleece!

Yes, there at my feet was a real golden fleece, rolling over and over while playing with a feather. She was a soiled mite, the color of the sawdust in which she chased her elusive prey with a playful and tigerish abandon.

I took her up, unresisting.

She wore a pathetic, weather-beaten, red ribbon about her neck which told me plainly enough she was somebody's pet, perhaps Mr.

Mann's! Two gay and friendly eyes looked deeply into mine, and we loved each other.

With fitting diplomacy I led my butcher away from our mutton in search of particulars about this absurd elf. He frankly told me she had walked in two days before, taking her welcome and keep for granted.

I said "good morning" to Mr. Mann, for once feeling that I had the best of the bargain—she of the golden fleece, his gift, was in my newmarket pocket.

The cat in the bag, for my pocket had become one for the time being, rode up on the cable car to Nob Hill in discreet silence. There was not a protest, a squeak, or a

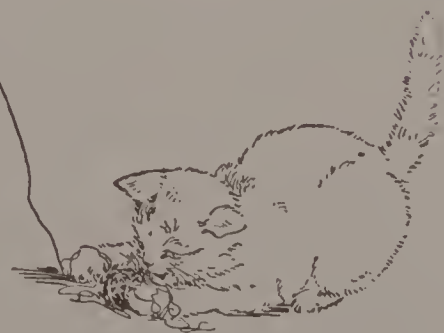




yellow ear manifest on that exciting journey.

Once in the house, I produced my treasure-kin triumphantly, and was considerably astonished to hear it called "pot-black" and "ugly." I pleaded its cause; I called attention to the great topaz eyes, its innocent expression and its adorable head of yellow down, for all the world like that of a little blond girl.

A warm suds bath was agreed upon to settle the mooted point of beauty, which was necessary to its becoming a member of the family. The poor waif went through the lathering and cleansing process with many signs of luxurious enjoyment, and came





out of the drying-basket a full-fledged beauty.



Fifi was truly fascination itself; a baffling mixture of high-bred beauty and feline grace. Her head was delicate and elegant; her body a succession of supple curves, and her thick, silky coat was white and yellow, shading on the back into the gold and brown of polished tortoise-shell.

Not to be less indulgent than her original owner, I knotted a ribbon of baby blue about her white throat. Fifi had more vanity than was good for her, and after this she was always restless until her ribbons were put on in the morning, which interesting ceremony took place at ten o'clock. I am sorry to confess it, but she spent a large part of her

day posing in front of a long mirror, and actually she could not pass any polished surface, wood, brass or marble, without taking a sly and admiring peep at herself.

Notwithstanding, her affection and playfulness radiated like sunshine. She was as irresistible and capricious as a whirlwind, and carried everything and everybody before her. Nothing was too good for that luxurious young creature, and not the longest and sharpest of hat-pins ever kept her from napping in a hat if it otherwise pleased her fancy. I am sure if Miss Fifi had been about to build herself a house, she would have said to her architect: "Fashion me a villa exactly like a bureau outside and inside. The same to be furnished





throughout, when done, with the finest of gloves, handkerchiefs and laces."

Those little, white teeth were very knowing about dainties, too, and sometimes Fifi was seen standing on tip-toes, trying to look into the contents of the skillets and the stew-pans bubbling on the kitchen range.

Her popularity on Nob Hill soon grew apace. Very grave and great people were seen to look out of the tail of the eye at this vision of a miniature tigress at play with a blade of grass.

*"Were her antics play'd in the eye
Of a thousand standers-by,
Clapping hands with shout and stare,
What would little tabby care
For the plaudits of the crowd?
Over-happy to be proud,
Over-wealthy in the treasure
Of her own exceeding pleasure!"*



And Fifi, sitting in a great window, looking out to sea, with evident enjoyment of the fair scene, was a familiar picture in the neighborhood.

When the bell rang she hastened to the door to receive visitors, conducting them into the drawing-room with little coos, murmurs and cries. She could never see a dainty handkerchief, even in the hands of a guest, without biting it with a little spasm of pleasure.



She grew faster in grace and popularity than in body, and thus it was not long before she found her real throne—a corner of the drawing-room tea-table.

Now, granted that this sounds

badly in cold print, I am sure no New England Priscilla would have objected to the living reality, or refused a cup of the fragrant brew. Dainty and beautiful Fifi was more charming than any ornament upon the table. Her gloss and coloring made the Dresden cups look absolutely pale and common-place, while her eyes outshone any cunningly-wrought device in gold, silver or enamel. Pretty, white hands offered her bits of biscuit, and darker and stronger ones considered it a privilege to hold small spoonfuls of cream or tea under that deft, rose-leaf tongue. All of these attentions were accepted with the dignity and grace of a small sovereign.

About this time
I had an inspira-





tion. If one cat could give so much pleasure, one's joy in living would be doubled by owning two, and tripled by owning three. My fancy, once aroused, marched on. The butcher had made his contribution, why not look to the green-grocer in the adjoining stall for a similar token of good will? I went to market again, this time to see Villani, one of those Italians who take to commerce in fruits and vegetables in the New World as a duck takes to water.

Yes, truly, Villani had cats enough and to spare. He was sole proprietor of seven kittens, a day or two old. With the impulsive generosity of the Latin race, he offered me the whole family, or any part, parcel or section thereof, but,



Memoranda Rensselaer
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of course,
Villani did



not express himself in such fine English. There was one condition: that, unless I took the whole group, I was to wait until the kittens were a little more grown. I practiced great self-denial, and stayed away a week. My modest choice fell on two specimens, one a coal black kitten, the other a tortoiseshell.

Villani warned me, in his broken English, that I had come too soon, but I turned a deaf ear to his advice.

My booty was received on Nob Hill with vivid and indignant protest. However, as it was too late to return the "tender-feet," they were rolled in flannel and placed in a basket on the hearth, after

being carefully warmed and fed. The first sweet sleep of the night was broken by a faint and oft-repeated noise.

What was it?

The restless winds, that cannot sleep at night in that country, or a burglar, filing at a window in the other end of the house? No, it was neither. It was Nicholas and Toto, crying for their supper. Quick! Some warm milk and a tiny spoon for these wailing mice with their piteous faces. Aye, and this to be repeated every two hours, day and night, for three weeks!

Fortunately, this labor of pity was soon supported by a scientific interest in



the little martyrs. Could the spark of life be kept alive in those tiny beings?



We thought it could, if we worked like galley slaves. No training-school could have organized a life-saving service more promptly or more thoroughly. An old, rockerless wicker cradle for dolls was found in the attic and filled with soft flannels. A small hot-water bag was added for warmth by night, and the pagoda and its contents were carefully sunned by day.

The situation was also somewhat strained by Fifi's state of mind. She was sulking with displeasure and jealousy over our attempt to found an Italian colony. The little humbug actually pretended to be ignorant of the very existence of

that cradle and its occupants. How I longed to turn Nicholas and Toto over to her, if only for one night!

But, she was such a little kitten herself, I could hardly lay this burden on her; and, certainly, she was in no humor to volunteer her services, or to grant me a favor, however humbly

hinted. Plainly, obliged to con-
vigils, or hire

am quite

Fifi was



I asked or I would be
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a nurse. I

sure that

restored to her sweet-tempered self, soon after, by remorse for one of her escapades.

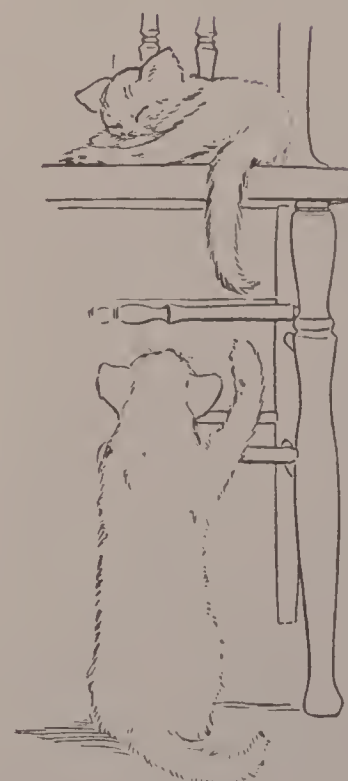
Her fad was not a ladylike frolic on the lawn, but a furious, wild romp in the coal-bin in the cellar.

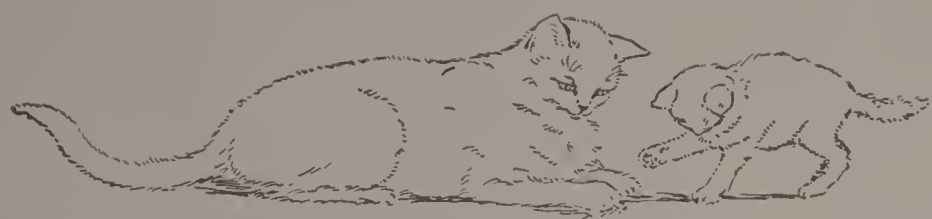
With the cunning of a serpent, and its swiftness, too, she would steal

away and descend to that pit, to leap and roll to her heart's content in its pitchy blackness. So far, so good, but to return to the bosom of her family was quite another matter. The mischievous and merry Fifi dreaded this ordeal.

It was no use for the silly creature to try to look unconscious. She was twice as black, and altogether as foolish and confused as a stoker on an ocean liner would be if unexpectedly called from the nethermost depths to take a cup of tea with the commander of the squadron.

The two brothers now slept, cried and ate with great regularity, but it seemed impossible for them to grow. We hung over their cradle, waiting for





the evidences
of growth, but

while there were signs of life and vitality, their most striking features still suggested mice, rather than kittens.

Fifi, as though in shame and apology for that affair of the coal-bin, now began to show curiosity, and even a little friendly interest in our cradle and its mysteries. Who knew but that she was planning to take their entire charge? We would not put so much as a straw in her way, for that surely would have diverted the giddy Fifi.

Soon after, Master Nicholas began to thrust his black feet and ears through his swaddling clothes, and then some black arms appeared and clawed vigorously. Before we knew it, the little hob-goblin



was running in and out of a hole in the basket as though he were a fully naturalized citizen. His eyes were as yellow as brass, and were droll enough with his coal-black body. No wonder Fifi had learned to adore him on the score of his complexion. Although affectionate and kind-hearted, he turned out to be the most lawless of bandits.

Miss Fifi took in the situation perfectly, and saw that he, being motherless, would have to acquire physical culture and good breeding from her. Accordingly, she taught him to wash his own hands and face and to brush his hair pompadour, as became a little foreigner. Then she showed him how to climb a hassock, at least



eight inches high, and the proper method of making the perilous descent. She taught him ball, and hide-and-go-seek, and you may be sure she was not so rude as to forget to introduce him to the wily kittens in the mirror—real trick kittens, these!

When they were tired of racing, she would put her beautiful, white arms about him and hold him on her lovely breast as though he were an infant.

Toto? Why, he was a tiger kitten. His eyes were the most intelligent, loving and sad that were ever seen. He did not care to join in that rough play. Sometimes he

came out in the sunshine and had a roll with his little black



bear of a brother, but he liked better to sit in the pagoda and watch the other two. His little face would brighten gently, and, now and then, when the games were very exciting and furious, he would stand up, resting his fore paws on the edge of the basket, for all the world as though he were in a private box at the circus, and Fifi and Nicholas were performing professionally in three rings at once. Why couldn't he call out, "Encore! encore! bravo! bravo!"



How beautiful and bewitching Fifi was! And was there ever such a brave and amusing fellow as brother Nicholas?

As Toto did not care to romp, he was naturally held and petted much more than the others, for no



one could endure to see the little fellow look wistful or sad.

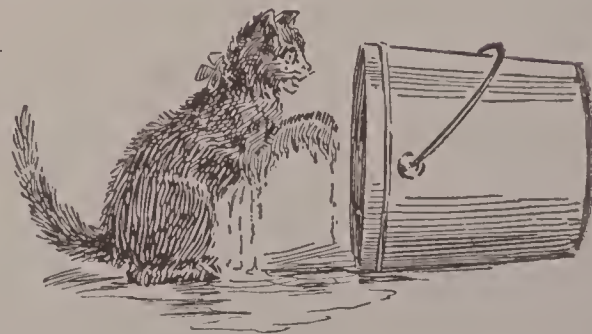
As you can imagine, Fifi flashed from one end of the house to the other at pleasure. She had lost her baby-teeth, and her gums were now bare, an advantage which Nicholas hailed with enthusiasm.

But it took more than the absence of first teeth, and the tardy growth of the second crop, to prevent her appearance at the table three times a day, with sociable regularity. She would enter the dining room with a joyous call, leap with the grace of a leopard on some friendly shoulder, and on one occasion, between the courses (tell it not outside the nursery!), she walked the entire length of the table, with her tail plumed in the air. No one so much as thought

of scolding the bewitching creature. About this time, Nicholas began to learn his way about the house. He had long known how to run from room to room, but stair-cases had been precipices quite beyond his comprehension.

It had been a part of the routine of the nursery to leave the Italians asleep in their cradle while we supped or dined, but they were now so knowing that at the faintest sound from the dining room they would prick up their ears and scamper to the head of the stairs.

Nicholas was altogether too small to leap from step to step, as his kind do, but his way of overcoming that difficulty proved he had the head of a civil engineer. He managed





the descent just as any little boy would get out of a high window—hang as far as possible by the arms, and then let go. So, there were heard twenty successive, fat, little bumps, between each one a long silence—for, undoubtedly, it hurt—then a mad scurry of little feet, an eager scratching up the skirt, and, behold! Master Nicholas was ready for his dessert, like any well-bred little Italian.

Toto? Do not believe for a moment that he was forgotten. He was always found waiting patiently at the head of the stairs, and was brought down and placed before a blaze on the hearth, where a tiny dish of cream was ready for him.

Fifi and Nicholas were both kind



to him, but their games were too violent, except for little panthers. Animal spirits seemed to be the soul of their friendship, and that left Toto a little alone.

Once, I saw them all grouped in a small basket, Toto's eyes shining with happiness, his head held high with gratified pride, at last, he admitted into ship in the society. Nicholas shortly after graduated under Fifi, and he could soon give her points in climbing.



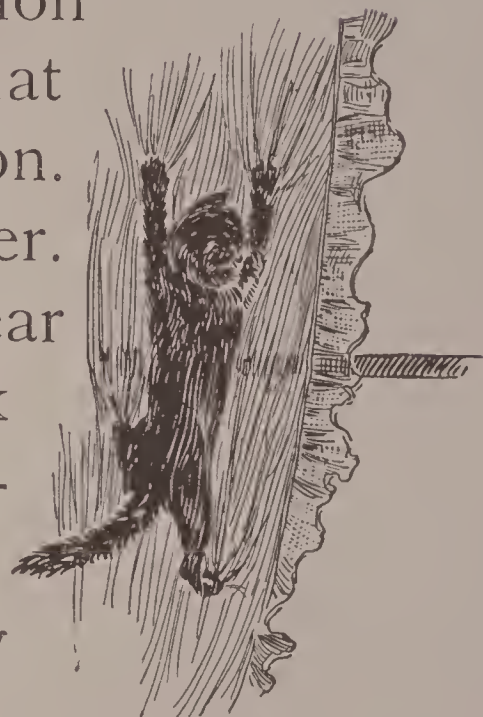
Who was it who retired to a distant corner, to shoot with a furious impulse across the carpet, scale the chair, the shoulders, and land patly

on his victim's head? Who was it, when he saw his brush and comb taken out, would swarm up a window curtain like a middy, and sit for hours on the curtain pole, a two-story step-ladder the only persuasion that would move him?

Summer, the season of the year had now arrived when San Franciscans go to their country homes *to get warm*. Fifi, accordingly, was taken to San Mateo. Here she spent the long days frisking on the lawn, sprinting up pepper trees and napping and basking on rose covered verandas. Nothing so gross as nightmares of mice ever invaded her sleep; she dreamed only of the countless humming-birds that were fanning her with their silken wings.



A little later, an invitation came to Nicholas and Toto to spend a few days in the country. As Toto was not robust, and Nicholas seemed to be actually drooping for Fifi, there was only one question about their going, and that was the one of transportation. This was a delicate matter. A person could hardly appear among the fashionable folk who fill the Saturday afternoon trains for San Mateo, Menlo Park and Monterey with his arms full of kittens.



No, an inspiration was necessary! It came in the shape of a fancy fruit basket, which was lined in the twinkling of Nicholas' eyes, the would-be travelers put inside, and the top carefully enclosed with crisp, yellow



tarletan. Surely, a more attractive looking basket of imported fruit was never carried aboard a train! No one could see through the small holes, and I am quite sure that as we passed through the Addition, no one saw Master Nicholas' black arm poking through an opening in the basket, clutching wildly at nothing whatever, in his enjoyment of his travels.

In the garden, nearly smothered in honeysuckle, was a pretty, little building for the "China-boys." In it I selected a sunny room for the two brothers, and soon surrounded them with every comfort.

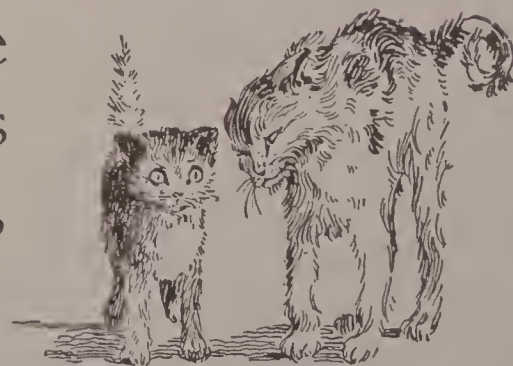
There was milk, fresh from the Jersey cow, the great, warm sun shining all day long, and banks of



sweet herbs and flowers to roll under. Nicholas nearly burst with contentment and satisfaction. He walked out in front of his ranch and looked at the strutting fat hens in delighted amazement. Certainly, here was a promise of some fine hunting when he should be a little more grown!

He saw a ferocious country cat in the drive, and, to Toto's great admiration, he walked right up to this giant, to whom he was not knee-high, and introduced himself with frank courtesy.

How Toto wished he were strong enough to walk about so bravely among these gigantic birds and beasts! Ah, but Toto made friends, too. There was Bessie, the thoroughbred,





who never saw Nicholas at all, but walked right over his head to get to Toto, whom she licked and fondled till he fell asleep in the fur of her neck.

It was a merry house-party out in the "China-boys'" bungalow, and both Nicholas and Toto were reluctant to enter their basket Pullman for the return to town.

On the train Nicholas showed his true nature, and with great daring escaped from his basket. Imagine my mortification when the little brigand ran for the watch chains and diamond studs of the merchant princes and senators on board the train, and then rolled in ecstasy on the cushions at the fright he had given them.

Two weeks later, we were packed

up, the brothers, by all means, included, to spend the remainder of the season in the country.

If Nicholas had been naughty coming up on the train, he was certainly shocking on this occasion, for although he knew I had no half-fare ticket for him, and that kittens are not allowed in passenger coaches, he insisted upon having the freedom of the car, in the very face of the conductor, who smiled and pretended he did not see this open violation of the law.

So, then, the doors of the ranch were again thrown open, and Nicholas and Toto were keeping bachelor's hall once more. How glad everybody was to see them, and how many people said that the sunshine and sand-



baths would surely cure Toto. There were two little men, of six and eight, who had brought clean, white sand from the beach for the invalid, and who were unflagging in their kind ministrations.

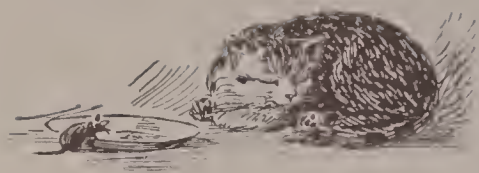
Toto was certainly happy. He looked around him with loving eyes, and all night he slept in the arms of his sturdy little brother.

Bessie turned her back on the stable and her puppies, who were getting clumsy and noisy, and devoted herself to her new charge.

Little Toto was not well. Like all invalids, he knew every sound of the early morning. First, there were the cocks, then the birds, then the hens and chickens, then the horses in the stalls, then the steps of



the man carrying by the frothing milk, and the cheerful bustle from the blue and white kitchen. He liked to creep out very early and lie in the brilliant morning sunshine.

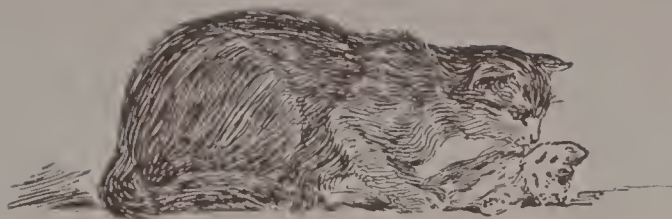


Some one brought a saucer of warm milk and placed it so near he did not have to move so much as an inch to lap it.

Ah! and there was the master passing, who liked to gather his own breakfast fruit from the tree, actually calling to him with a cheery voice:

“Well, well, old man; how are you this morning? You are going to pull through all right!”

How good this freshness of nature, and how pleasant to have one's home in the center of so much hap-



piness and kindness. What could a little kitty do to show his appreciation of all this love? Nothing, but to caress every hand that touched him, and sing as though his heart would break at every foot-fall.

Contrary to all expectation, Toto did not get stronger, and for a day or two had not cared to leave his house.

Yes, the blinds should be closed, the glaring sun shut out from the tired eyes, and Bessie should not leave him for a second. Why, it was getting so no one could pass the ranch without looking in!

One day we left the little fellow in good care for a short trip to Palo Alto. We returned by an early train, and started for the usual afternoon drive. When we had left the

bustle of the station behind us, the coachman turned and said, so gently one knew he, too, was sorry:

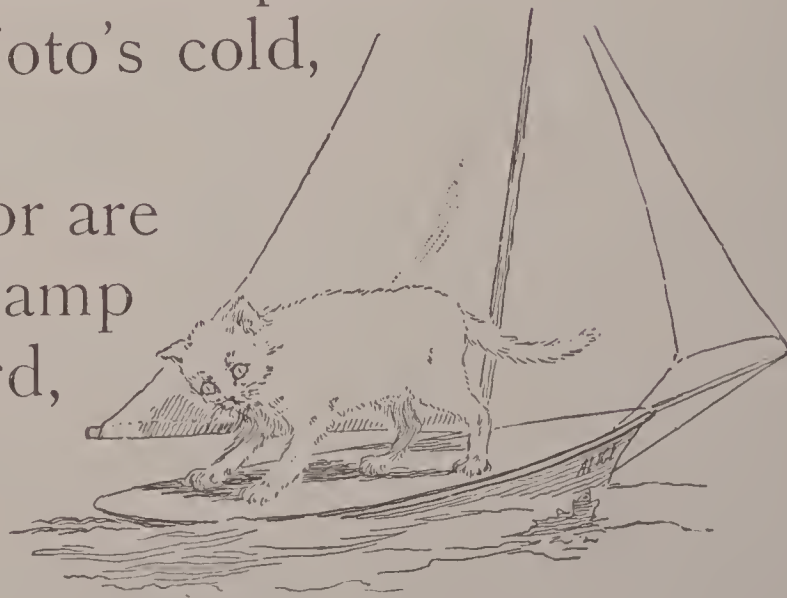
“Miss Margaret, I have some bad news. Little Toto is dead.”

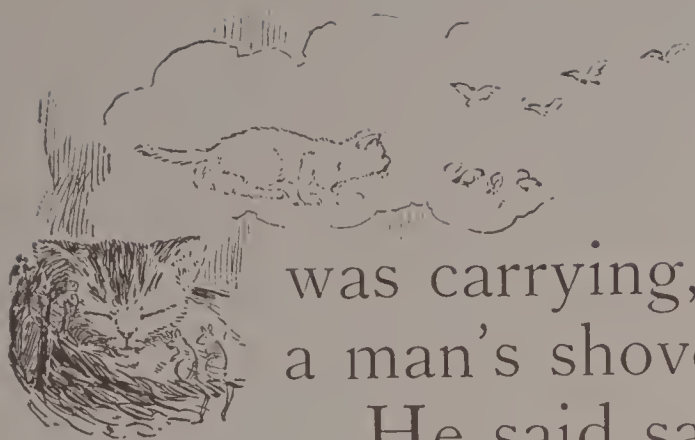
What! tears for a poor, little kitten!

“Ernest, home. We will not drive to-day.”

We hurried to the little house, buried in honeysuckle and banked high with heliotrope, across which the long shadows and the plum-colored rays of declining day were slanting. There lay chubby Nicholas, sleeping with his head pillowed lovingly on poor Toto's cold, patient, little form.

Pathos and humor are not far apart. A tramp of busy feet was heard,





and two little men appeared. The smaller was carrying, with much difficulty, a man's shovel, twice his size.

He said sadly, earnestly, "I'll dig the grave for you, Margaret."

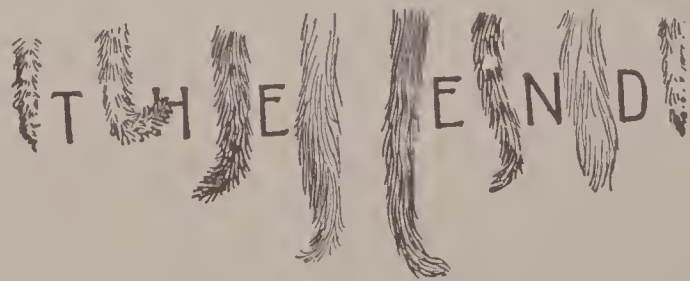
The older boy was very pale, and was trying to smile; but, why should a little boy try to be gay when his eyes are filled with tears?

Little Toto was wrapped tenderly in fresh, white linen, and laid in a box lined with fragrant sweet clover. The little boy with the great shovel led the way to the garden, followed by a sad little band. Poor baby Nicholas toddled along unheeded, mewling piteously for Toto.

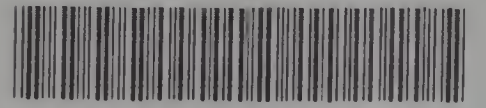
The next morning, as I walked in the garden and feasted on the freshness of nature, my eyes drank

in the loveliness and serenity of the landscape; the great sweep of the yellow, undulating plain, freckled with pastures and kine, and gemmed on its crests and dips with the green of farms and the emerald parks of the wealthy and noble, the whole skirted by a purple chain of hills and a gracious coast line of sapphire, dotted with far-away sails.

Rare plants perfected themselves, and choice flowers bloomed in wantonness on either hand—and then my eyes fell on a tiny mound, covered with flowers. Its head was marked by a small shingle cross, raised by loving hands for little Toto.



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